

REMARKS

This application has been amended so as to place it in condition for allowance at the time of the next Official Action.

The Official Action objects to claims 17 and 18 as being of improper dependent form. Applicant has cancelled such claims, and reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection are therefore respectfully requested.

The Official Action rejects claims 1 and 4 under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by OHNISHI et al. The Official Action rejects the following sets of claims under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over the identified prior art references: claims 5, 12 and 16 over OHNISHI et al. in view of INOUE et al.; claim 8 over OHNISHI et al. in view of INOUE et al., and further in view of VOGELGESANG et al.; claims 9-11 over OHNISHI et al. in view of YAMANE et al.; and claims 13-15 over OHNISHI et al. in view of INOUE et al., and further in view of YAMANE et al.

The Official Action explicitly states, however, that claims 2, 3 and 6-8 are allowable but for their dependence upon rejected base claims. In accordance with such statement of allowability, applicant has amended independent claim 1 to incorporate the features of allowable claim 2, and separately amended independent 5 to incorporate the features of allowable claim 6. In light of such amendment, the cancellation of claims 2 and 6, the amendment of other claims to properly depend from the newly-amended claims, and the cancellation of claims 17 and

18 as discussed above, applicant believes that all claims remaining in the application are in condition for immediate allowance and an early indication of the same is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner has any questions or requires further clarification of any of the above points, the Examiner may contact the undersigned attorney so that this application may continue to be expeditiously advanced.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 25-0120 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17.

Respectfully submitted,

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